

HEARING PANEL - DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Diocese of New Jersey

Vs.

TITLE IV INVESTIGATION
CANON IV.12.1
WRITTEN STATEMENT
July 22, 2019

THE VEN. GIDEON A. UZOMECHINA,
Presbyter

PROCEEDURAL HISTORY

Fr. Uzomechina was ordained a Deacon on June 22, 2002 and Priest June 29, 2003 by The Rt. Rev. Ken S.E. Okeke, Bishop of the Diocese on the Niger, Church of Nigeria, in the Anglican Communion. Pursuant to TEC Canon III.10.2, he was received into The Episcopal Church by Bishop Council on October 13, 2011 and became canonically resident in the Diocese of New Jersey. Subsequently, Title IV proceedings were initiated against him. He was placed on Administrative Leave by Bishop Stokes on October 11, 2016, which has since been modified January 5, 2017 and January 19, 2017.

The Reference Panel in the Title IV proceeding met initially on October 19, 2016 and referred the matter for investigation. Following investigation, it became apparent that there were three complaining witnesses. The Panel on April 26, 2017 referred the matter to Bishop Stokes for a possible Accord. In late May, Bishop Stokes forwarded a proposed Accord to then Church Attorney Gregory Winter for discussion with Fr. Uzomechina's attorney, Michael Rehill. Following Mr. Winter's untimely death, Mr. Rehill advised the succeeding Church Attorney, Paul De Sarno, that the proposed Accord would be rejected; Mr. Rehill made no counterproposal. Accordingly, on October 18, 2017, the Reference Panel referred this matter to a Conference Panel.

A second round of discussion of possible Accord language occurred but did not come to fruition.

The following Updated Written Statement was prepared by the Church Attorney as required under Canon IV.13.1.

OFFENSES RELATED TO COMPLAINANT: [REDACTED]

Count 1

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(1) Sexual Misconduct with Complainant.

In or about October of 2013 Respondent Uzomechina sexually harassed Complainant [REDACTED] at a motel/hotel while attending [REDACTED] conference in NYC, and thereafter at [REDACTED]. While Complainant [REDACTED] resided at [REDACTED] Respondent Uzomechina would come to his room demanding sex. Respondent Uzomechina required [REDACTED] to watch male gay porn with him on several occasions. The unwanted sexual advances and harassment continued for as long as [REDACTED] resided [REDACTED].

Count 2

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(6) conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation.

A. Respondent Uzomechina took payments from [REDACTED] to attend two different conferences with him in 2011 and 2013. He refused to return the money when [REDACTED] was subsequently unable to attend, and claimed that they were nonrefundable. He charged [REDACTED] \$1,000.00 for a conference [REDACTED]; that price bore no relation to the actual cost of the registration fee. [REDACTED] could not obtain a visa in time to attend and Respondent kept all the money. [REDACTED] paid \$1,300.00 to Respondent for the second conference plus additional sums that respondent demanded for "the cost of a Green card" (\$2,500.00) and thousands more for "getting a Social Security Number" for [REDACTED].

B. [REDACTED] was paying Complainant [REDACTED]. The checks were given to Respondent Uzomechina, who kept the money for himself. Respondent Uzomechina intercepted and kept for himself payments from [REDACTED] of approximately \$500- \$600 a semester.

Count 3

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(8) any conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy.

See Counts 1, 2 & 4.

Count 4

Violation of Title IV 1(c) a member of the Clergy shall abide by the promises and vows made when Ordained.

Respondent Uzomechina has repeatedly violated his vows as a priest and as a husband. His behavior is more akin to that of a sociopathic sexual predator than that of a nurturing priest.

OFFENSES RELATED TO COMPLAINANT: [REDACTED]

Count 1

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(1) Sexual Misconduct with Complainant

On or about [REDACTED] Respondent Uzomechina made repeated unwanted sexual advances towards Complainant [REDACTED] at the Days Inn in [REDACTED].

Count 2

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(6) conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation

Respondent Uzomechina lured Complainant [REDACTED] to New Jersey from his college [REDACTED] University in Michigan with promises of a laptop computer, financial help, and moral support. Thereafter he attempted to sexually seduce Complainant [REDACTED]

OFFENSES RELATED TO COMPLAINANT: CANON JEMMOTT

Count 1

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(1) Sexual Misconduct.

On October 11, 2016 Cannon Jemmott met with the respondent and Bishop Stokes at Diocesan house Trenton, NJ. At that time Uzomechina admitted getting into bed with Complainant [REDACTED] and "hugging" him.

Count 2

Violation of Title IV 1(h)(6) conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation.

On October 11, 2016 Cannon Jemmott met with the respondent and Bishop Stokes at Diocesan house Trenton, NJ. At which time Uzomechina admitted keeping "some" of Complainant [REDACTED]'s wages.

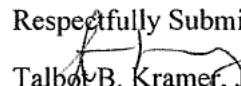
Count 3

Violation of Title IV 1(d) a member of the Clergy shall abide by the requirements of any applicable Accord or Order, or any applicable Pastoral Direction, restriction on Ministry or placement on administrative leave issued under Canon IV.7.

On October 11, 2016 Bishop Stokes placed Respondent Uzomechina on administrative leave. The terms of the suspension include, at paragraph #4 "You are prohibited from serving in a priestly capacity in any Church of the Episcopal Church or Anglican Communion or in any capacity or setting as a Chaplain/Priest including prison, hospital, school, hospice or nursing home." On January 5, 2017 the terms of the administrative leave were modified, but not this provision. On January 19, 2017 the terms of the administrative leave were again modified to include a prohibition from engaging in any church financial transactions.

After January 19, 2017 it came to the attention of the Diocese that Respondent Uzomechina had accepted a position as a chaplain to troubled youth in a juvenile detention setting in direct violation of the terms of his administrative leave and in violation of Title IV 1(d).

Respectfully Submitted,


Talbot B. Kramer, Jr., Esq.
Church Attorney